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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAKAR 000394

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STATE FOR R, ECA, AF/PDPA, DRL/IRF, AF/RSA, AF/W AND INR/AA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [KPAO](#) [ETRD](#) [SG](#)

SUBJECT: SENEGALESE REACTIONS TO OFFENSIVE CARTOONS

REF: STATE 020587

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY A/DCM CLAUD YOUNG FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Senegalese reactions to Danish cartoons have been largely muted and moderate. Nonetheless, Embassy demarched the Foreign Ministry to denounce violence and support freedom of speech. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On February 14, Political Counselor made reftel demarche to Pape Oumar Ndiaye, the Director for International Organizations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

¶3. (SBU) Senegalese reactions to Danish cartoons have been largely muted and moderate. Many have condemned anti-Danish violence although the Muslim teachers union has called on Senegalese to boycott Danish goods. President Wade called the cartoons &blasphemous and argued they could "not be justified under pretext of press freedom." National daily "Walfadjri" owner called the cartoons "irresponsible," betraying a lack of tolerance toward Muslims. His brother, political and religious activist Ahmed Khalifa Niassé, criticized the cartoons but added: "I would have liked to see, along with vehement protests against Denmark and its exports, a systematic denunciation of terrorist attacks carried out in the name of Islam -- a sentiment rarely heard."

¶4. (SBU) Spokesman Abdul Aziz Sy, Junior, of Senegal's largest brotherhood, the Tidjanes, called two weeks ago for Tidjane mosques to denounce the cartoons in February 3 Friday prayers. In a sermon delivered at our political assistant's mosque, former Islamic Institute Director Rawane Baye condemned lack of tolerance both by those who drew the cartoons and those who had used violence to protest them. Sy himself, at a February 9 Tidjane youth movement rally, similarly condemned the cartoons and immoderate protests against them.

¶5. (SBU) On February 16, Sy, Ambassador Moustapha Cissé and the Khalife of Pire held a meeting in which they stressed the cartoons are the disrespectful acts of individuals and not a collective anti-Islamic movement. Some people present did trample a Danish flag. Other Muslim groups have called for a February 18 march from Dakar's Grand Mosque to the Obelisk following Friday prayers.

¶6. (C) Meanwhile, Cheikh Bamba Dièye, a 2005 IVP and a leading intellectual of Senegal's other major Brotherhood, the Mourides, told PolOff the cartoons were inexcusable proof the West had not made an effort to understand Muslims or that which they hold important. The violence, he said, was being manipulated by those with their own political agendas and was highly regrettable but should have been foreseen.

¶7. (SBU) The only truly hard-line reaction we have seen to

the cartoons came in a joint statement by Airport Mosque Imam MBaye Niang and disgraced politician Abdou Latif Gueye, a former Wade counselor jailed in 2002 for misdirecting government medical supplies. The two argued that Wade had not moved quickly enough to denounce the cartoons, and said this should disqualify Senegal from holding the 2007 Organization of the Islamic Conferences (OIC) Summit. No one else has supported their position.

JACKSON